1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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permit her to marry into local farms, in two of the cases on a somewhat better scale than the farms which they had left. The case of the South African shows how the man also may return with his fortune to establish himself in his native district after several years or even a decade or two of exile. 583

The dowry or marriage portion is, of course, a phenomenon universal in European peasant life. What gives it special interest here is its intimate connection with the farm family and with the land. That connection is evidenced particularly in the "writings."

After the "walking of the land" and the making of the bargain, the two parties to marry go to a solicitor. There the agreements reached are cast into proper legal form. The "writings" is a legal instrument conveying the ownership of the holding to the son. It is usually both marriage settlement and will. On the event of the stipulated marriage, the father conveys the farm and all appurtenances to his son in return for the portion brought in by the girl. The father makes also definite provisions for his own maintenance and that of his wife. Generally, these include the right to the "grass of a cow," to food and the use of the hearth, perhaps the yield of one patch of potatoes, and the use of a room in the house. The room is nearly always, at least in West and North Clare, the one known as the "west room" for reasons we shall examine later. To take care of possible disputes arising out of the failure of these provisions to work smoothly, certain very hard-headed stipulations are often included, allowing for the conversion of these rights into cash support or a lump sum. 583 584 428 888

In return for the farm, the father receives the fortune brought in by the girl and paid to him by her father. Furthermore, the provisions which must be made for other children are often transferred with the land. The father is now expected to give (if he has not given them already) portions to those of his children who are not to be settled 583 428

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CHAPTER VII

Family Transition at Marriage

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WITH the transfer of land at the marriage of the son who remains to work the farm, the relations of the members of the farm family to each other and to the farm they work undergo a drastic change. In the first place, the headship of the old couple under whom the family group worked undergoes change. The old couple relinquish the farm, they enter the age grade of the dying, and direction of the enterprise of the group passes from their hands to those of the young people. Something of the change has already been indicated in the "writings." From the point of view of the father, it means the abandonment of the ownership he has long enjoyed; from the point of view of the old woman it means she is no longer the "woman of the house." Her place is taken by the incoming daughter-in-law. Naturally, this change is accomplished in effect only with difficulty and with considerable reluctance upon the part of the old couple. Where the transition goes smoothly, father and son continue to work the farm together, but more often as the father grows older he retires to his seat by the hearth. For example, the authors know one family, consisting of a young man and his wife, their two children, and the old couple, which was regarded as a model of family harmony in the neighborhood. The young man did all the heavy work of the farm, but his father worked by his side. Yet the initiative in agricultural matters was clearly the

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592 888 young man's. The man, almost eighty, did not want to remain idle. "Time enough to sit by the fire in the winter," he would say. The greatest compliment the neighbors had for them was: "Look at the C——s. Old Johnny gives his boy a hand with everything. You wouldn't know which one has the farm."

592 888 606 The coming-in of the daughter-in-law is sometimes not so harmonious. Disputes arise, as the provisions made in the "writings" indicate. The following quotation from an official with years of experience in dealing with country people illustrates:

> As years go on, either the parents die or, if they live sufficiently long, they receive the old-age pension. Before they are qualified for this, the farms have to be made over to a son or daughter. This is done on the occasion of the son's marriage. The father reserves to himself and his wife the use of a room and the freedom of the kitchen, and they are entitled to all their food. The points were carefully discussed at length in the process of matchmaking, and the family of the future wife had no hesitation in agreeing, realizing that such points formed the final phase of a cycle of life on the farm. If the daughter-in-law has been well and properly advised by her mother, she immediately on her arrival in the new house submits tactfully to all proposals of her mother-in-law and lets the old lady feel that she is still the master mariner. If she didn't, it would cause a lot of trouble, as sometimes happens.

626 In such cases, the mediations of the parish priest and public opinion generally patch up a compromise, but, as far as the authors have observed, the transition is a gradual and successful one. The young woman usually serves a sort of apprenticeship at the hands of the mother-in-law in the new household, and at least during the young woman's childbearing years the older one maintains her control.

577 An open breach between the two couples is universally condemned, of course; "turning the old people out on the

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side of the road" has occurred, although the authors found 888
no instance of it. If, however, the new family finds the old 606
too great a burden, the old may go to the County Home, 577
where the poor and derelict old people are maintained. A grave stigma of inability to support one's duties still attaches to this.

It is interesting that the old-age pension, originally de- 592
signed in Great Britain to support the aged members of 888
an industrial population and extended some years later to 737
Ireland, has been incorporated into Irish farm life without upsetting, but rather reinforcing, the matchmaking pattern. The tendency is now to turn the farm over to the son as soon as the father passes his seventieth year. Receipt of the pension facilitates the maintenance of the old people and hastens the transfer of land to the son, as the farmers must divest themselves of their small farms in the majority of cases in order to become eligible for the pension.

Even from the point of view of the household expense, the pension is very welcome. In the words of one farmer:

> To have old people in the house is a great blessing in these times because if you have one, it means ten bob a week and, if you have two, it means a pound a week coming into the house. You take a man like O'D— and every Friday he will go to Corrofin [town] to collect his ten bob and he may buy a couple of bottles of porter, but spend the rest on things for the house and then come home with a few shillings which will go into the common fund.
>
> Not only that but it adds at least ten years to a man's life because the anticipation that each Friday he is to get ten shillings will cheer him up and keep him keen. Any house which has one old person is well off in the last few years, and, if there are two, it is a great blessing.

But the blessing the pension represents is more than an economic aid in bad times. It plays a great role in the transition the match brings about in family relationships. As one countrywoman phrased it:

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592 888 737 578 There is no chance that the old people would give up the land but for the pension, and there is no hurrying them. Before the old-age pension the father would keep the fat of the land and there would be argument between them, the young woman and the old woman slashing each other with tongs, the doors broke, and it would be two dwellings in the house, like, but since the old-age pension, there are no rows and, if there are, then they make it up with the old people for the ten bob a week.

592 888 If the transition is smooth, there need be no such violence of dispute as the last quotation describes. Each of the members of the household must adopt a new role in relation to the others. The old man abdicates his controlling position with his transference of the farm to his son. Usually such a change goes smoothly enough. If the son can still seem to defer to superior experience and judgment and refer decisions to the old man, all goes well. The happiest compromise is that suggested in the statement of one countryman:

> Every morning, even after I was married, I would go to the old man and ask him what he thought I should do for the day, and the old man would say that it is now time to do this or that or that the cows should have something done for them or the garden should be prepared. I would go then and spend twenty to thirty minutes doing what the old man said, and then go about my own business.

592 606 It is in the feminine province of farm work and household control that the transition is most difficult. Under the patrilocal type of marriage here described, the bride is a stranger and of necessity cannot rely upon the experience of an association of years in order to meet the new conditions, as can father and son. In the graphic phrase of the people, she is the "new woman."

For her the transition brings a violent uprooting from prior attachments. Unlike her urban sister, she has little of the ideal of romantic love to help her over the crisis. Consequently her introduction into the new household is

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592 606 578 It might get so bad that the old woman would get up and leave and go live with her daughter. She would do this if the mother of her daughter's husband were dead, even though the father might still be living in the house. But squabbles are bad things and, if the new woman would ask the old persons their opinion and how to do this and that, there would never be any trouble and the new wife could go ahead and do just as she pleased and the old people would think that she was doing it the way that she said. The daughter-in-law, if she did what she ought, would do this and treat the old folks nice.

[521 522] The theme of strife between mother and daughter-in-law is one dear to the hearts of the countrymen. It appears very frequently in conversation and in jokes. If the family is to continue its existence, the introduction of the new woman must be effected smoothly. The whole moral force of the community as well as the interest of family harmony bear upon the two women. The fear of gossip in the neighborhood operates strongly to keep the young woman with her husband, and every family makes a strong attempt to hide its personal troubles as much as possible from the general knowledge of the community.

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Nevertheless, stranger as the new woman may be, the norms of the community in ordinary cases demand that the young husband take the part of his wife. The bond between them is stronger than that between son and parent. As the quotation above shows, it is usually the mother who must leave. The country people deplore such an event, but they know that the son "has right" in so doing. Many statements of this attitude are to be heard among the small farmers and any examinations of cases of dispute which end in rupture show the attitude to be enforced in reality.

That this should be the case reflects the function of the marriage and matchmaking of the farm family. It provides for continuance.

592 ● 888 The new position of the old couple and their desires in the altered situation which has seen their displacement ex-

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press this need for continuance. They are part of the pattern themselves. The statements of the blessings they bring to the farm family with their pension money are very elliptical assessments of their new place within the group.

In their new role, if the transition has been smooth, they retain, if not a dominance of control and direction of the group economic enterprise, at least a dominance of respect and prestige. They occupy a venerable and dignified place in the community and within the household. The sentiments of which they have been the object during the years of their son's youth and manhood undergo no change, even though their strict control relaxes and may disappear.

Likewise when, with the birth of the bride's children, the newly married couple begin to create a full farm family of their own, the old couple remain a part of the united group. They very soon become the objects of the children's love and respect, and enter into the complex of family relationship and family behavior which fashions the status of the children.

This new completion of the family pattern the countrymen express, as they do the reciprocities of kinship, in terms of help and aid to the economic unit of the farm. One countryman generalized as follows:

> When there are children in the house, the old people are a great help to the mother because the old woman would nurse the youngsters and see that they did not fall into the fire or something of that nature, and thus the woman can go about her business. The old woman would help while the old man would keep on at his work just as long as he was able, because it was in the nature of things that he had always done so. As they grew older, they might do some of the lighter work, but they would always help.

He went on to discuss the new relationships between family members and the modification of the immediate family behaviors which the presence of the old couple brings about.

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592 888 His shifting the topic from help to alignments within the family is entirely unconscious; it could not better illustrate the connection between work roles and reciprocal interaction in the family.

If there was a squabble between the mother and daughter, the old woman would more than likely stand up for the daughter. She would teach her how to do things and would have more patience than the father.

592 888 589 Quite as before in the case of the farm economy, the strength of the pattern reveals itself in the aberrant cases. Where there is no old couple to take up new status and position in the family group, others within the family of the older generation or even of the same may be forced into such a position.

Two cases came under the particular notice of the authors. In one an elder sister became to all intents and purposes the "old woman" in the house. A widow, she owned the farm, was in the "west room," and had the place at the hob. Her younger sister and her husband, who had married into the farm, managed the farm and knew that their children would inherit it. The elder sister helped a bit with the household, but spent much of her time before the fire. Both the man and woman of the house referred to her as "the old woman," a term of respect, and one of the authors, who lived in the house for a time, learned only after much intimacy the half-forgotten fact that she was not mother but sister to the younger woman. In the other case it was a father's sister who took up the role, the product of long substitution for a lost mother, and at the match the writings made provision for her.

888 561 Intimately connected with the transition at marriage are all the phenomena of age grading so marked in Irish country life. The old couple advance one step in their course through life; they enter a new age grade.

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must. They descend from father to son with the house and the farm on which it stands.

It is into this room that the old couple move upon the son's marriage. They move in among the symbols of family unity, among the religious symbols of the house, into surroundings of a certain religious or sacred character. If we can discover certain other indications of the nature of this room, we shall feel warranted in drawing conclusions as to the nature of the change which takes place in the status of the old couple and the attitudes which surround them.

This room we have described is the "west room" mentioned in the "writings." It is so literally. With remarkable uniformity the small farmers' houses in West and North Clare face east and west, the room behind the hearth being generally at the west end of the house. Now the west room and the western end of the house are associated in folklore with the "fairies" which still flourish in the countrymen's minds, especially among the older generation.

The Irish "fairies" include the spirits of the dead. In fact, the identity between the two is explicitly recognized. It was so at Luogh, where older men could name the "good people" with whom they had had encounters.

It is the west room and the western end of the house that the fairies frequent. Where a fairy path is believed to pass the house, it passes invariably along the western end of the house. The country people of Luogh and other parts of West Clare give this as the reason why no extensions, outhouses, sheds, or other structures are built on that side; bad luck would result. In Luogh none of the twenty-five houses of the townland had any structure of any sort built there. And it is often in this room that the fairies spend the night when they visit a house on their nocturnal travels. If we remember that the old people, relinquishing their adult status and preparing for death, move into this room amid heirlooms, religious pictures, and photographs of dead

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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members of the household, we are forced to postulate the sacred and semireligious nature of the attitudes surrounding the old couple and identifying them with the forces of the dead and the symbolic unity of the family, past and present.

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The match is a mechanism, from one point of view, for preservation of family unity through the sequence of the generations. The dominant interest of the old couple in the "new woman" brings this point out most forcefully. They are vitally concerned in providing heirs for the line. Consequently their evaluation of the "new woman" is made upon the score of her fertility. Their desire is as strong as hers. She must have children.

The chief reflection of this fact is not to be found in economic expressions, frequent as they are. Children mean more hands for the working corporation. The farmers express their desire for them once again in terms of "help." But help might be obtained in other ways, for it can be hired. Rather it is the continuity of the human nexus which is the true goal. The fact that much of the relationship between the old couple and the "new woman" is built around her childbearing illustrates where the motivating interest lies.

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The old couple appraise their daughter-in-law accordingly. The first year of the girl's new position is a time of apprenticeship. Work is light. Pregnancy is her major duty. All during her childbearing years the old woman aids her and helps her, praising her in terms of her increase and showing as great an interest in the arriving children as the mother. One countryman puts it as follows:

> This [a smooth relationship between the old couple and the new woman] carries on for seven or eight months, but, if then the old people do not see evidence of increase of young, then the boy's father's people get angry and abuse her, but if they do, they do not let her do any work and are so proud.

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CHAPTER IX

The Problem of the Aged

888 THE small farmers of the Irish countryside have a characteristic way of treating differences among themselves that is based upon relationships fundamental in the organization of their communities. Naturally these folkways are connected with the norms of family life. Perhaps the most important of them is their treatment of differences in age.

162 888 Ireland is in some ways an old person's country. The percentages of the old in the population are very high. Naturally the fact is closely allied to an emigration which until recently has drained the country of its young adult manhood and womanhood. And, as in the case of emigration and late marriage, it is the rural districts, or better, the small farmers who inhabit them, that set the norm for the whole country.

A comparison of the distribution of age groups over the population between aggregate rural areas and aggregate town areas, as made in the 1926 census,[1] shows the case clearly. For the whole Free State at that time there are 671 males per 10,000 males aged sixty-five to seventy-four in the aggregate rural areas, while in the aggregate town areas there are only 402 per thousand of that age. The proportions of females of this age to total females are higher

[1] *Census of Population, 1926*, vol. V, pt. I: Ages, Orphanhood and Conjugal Conditions.

[p. 158]

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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in both cases, but they show much the same relationship. In both sexes the number of old people is greater in the country districts. Conversely, of course, the country districts show a smaller number of people of adult years. Among males the country areas in the aggregate for the whole of the Free State count only 1,115 per 10,000 aged thirty-five to forty-four, while the towns count 1,234 per 10,000 in the same adult age group.

When the various county rural areas are subjected to internal comparisons, similar proportions of old and young appear. To give only one example, County Clare counts 752 per 10,000 males aged sixty-five to seventy-four in the aggregate rural areas of the county, but only 528 per 10,000 of the same age in the aggregate of the county's towns. Likewise, Meath, a county of the midland "ranching" area, shows a proportion between rural and urban districts of 620 to 392; and Galway, in part a "congested area," a proportion of 723 to 547. Thus within counties from all parts of Ireland the same greater concentration of the old is found in the country districts.

One can remark immediately from the examples given above that there is a progression in the degree with which, for the counties mentioned, the numbers of old people of the age group selected range above or below the average number of their age per 10,000 males for the whole population of the Free State. This fact introduces us to a new consideration, corollary to the last. It is in general the poorer western counties, where small holders predominate, which have the larger number of aged individuals. Numbers per 10,000 males of the age we have selected before sixty-five to seventy-four rise regularly among the rural populations of the Irish counties from the 614 and 620 of Kilkenny and Meath to the 841 and 835 of Leitrim and Monaghan. In such a scale, the southwestern counties, such as Clare, are again in the middle, though Clare itself

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with a count of 752 leans heavily toward the Leitrim side.

It becomes obvious that census records by age will all support the assumption. It is in the rural areas, and among the small farmers, that, relatively, the largest number of old people are to be found. Tables 2A and 2B [2] illustrate this conclusion graphically.

TABLE 2A

OLD PEOPLE IN IRELAND: RURAL AND URBAN AREAS IN SELECTED COUNTIES

Census Area	Males per 10,000 aged 65–74
Free State (all counties)	
Aggregate rural areas	671
Aggregate urban areas	402
Clare	
Aggregate rural areas	752
Aggregate urban areas	528
Meath	
Aggregate rural areas	620
Aggregate urban areas	393
Galway	
Aggregate rural areas	723
Aggregate urban areas	547

TABLE 2B

OLD PEOPLE IN IRELAND: SELECTED COUNTIES SHOWING MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM IN AGGREGATE RURAL AREAS

Census Area	Males per 10,000 aged 65–74
Kilkenny	614
Meath	620
Clare	752
Monaghan	835
Leitrim	841

That the large proportion of old people is a matter of the agricultural community is very evident again when the figures indicating the age of those following the various occupations are examined. This is important in gauging

[2] Based on tables from *Census of Population, 1926*, vol. V, pt. I.

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the provision Irish society makes for its old members, for numerically they are a large group. Not only are there larger numbers of old people relatively to other adults in the countryside than in the towns and in agricultural pursuits than in other occupations, but also there are more of them absolutely. Thus out of 550,772 males engaged in agriculture, there was one in 14 of them, or 41,130, over seventy years of age. Among all other "producers, makers and repairers," who numbered 154,016, there were only 3,655 septuagenarian males, or one man in 50. Even among the more sedentary occupations of the towns, the occurrence of old men in commercial, financial, or insurance pursuits was only one in 56 and in professions only one in 75. The occupational figures show that the old are still active and numerous in agriculture. In other fields old people are far less numerous and the numbers of retired persons are greater.

It is only among one sort of agriculturalist, the farm holders and their helping relatives, that this fact is true. Naturally the numbers of the old are high in Ireland, where they represent the survivors of a numerically larger generation thinned much by emigration and where their relative number in the total population is increased by the absence of many men and women who could, without emigration, swell the ranks of the young adult age groups. Nevertheless, within the framework of these proportions, it is the farm-holding agricultural group which sets the norm. Expressing the same proportions in percentages, agriculture counts among its male followers 9 per cent – holders and relatives assisting them – who are over seventy years of age. No other group exhibits such a percentage. The only other occupations to show any similar longevity or length of service are "makers of apparel and made-up textile goods" with 6 per cent of their number still engaged after the age of seventy. All others range much lower in percentage of aged individuals still occupied.

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The relatively great preponderance of the old in agriculture does not extend to the agricultural laborers. They number only 2 per cent of males over seventy. It is only among the farmers and farmers' relatives assisting them that so many old people are alive and active.

It becomes even more evident that it is the farm population which sets the norm for Ireland in this regard when we compare figures of this sort with those of the total population. In all Ireland 6.7 per cent of males are over seventy years of age. Those in the adult years twenty-five to twenty-nine and thirty to thirty-four number only 9.2 per cent and 8.0 per cent of the total males. The farm population with percentages of 8.4 and 8.0 in those ages is the only occupational group to show figures below those of the total population. All others rise above the average percentages for the whole country. Naturally it is the absolutely greater numbers of the farm population which weight the averages. Yet, understanding this, we must also understand that it is among the farm population that the norm is determined.

Statistics for females present rather different ratios. They need not detain us, as they are complicated by the inclusion of a larger category entitled "those engaged in home duties." The category embraces the greater number of urban women and makes comparison with farm women by occupation somewhat precarious. On the other hand, it has the merit of grouping them about household duties and provides in itself a good distinction between urban and rural household workers. Comparing them, then, we find 12 per cent of female farmers and relatives helping farmers over seventy, and of this 5 per cent and 8 per cent aged thirty to thirty-four and thirty-five to forty-four. (We choose here ages in which most of the women who marry are already married.) But among the women "engaged in home duties" (the category which embraces most townswomen, as well as unspecified numbers of countrywomen), only 4.4 per cent are over seventy, and

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conversely the more numerous 11 per cent and 23 per cent are thirty to thirty-four and thirty-five to forty-four. The total female population shows percentages of 8.3 per cent over seventy and 8 per cent and 15 per cent in the younger age grades. It can be seen how these comparisons bear out the conclusions presented by those of the males. It is among the farm population that the largest number of old people are to be found. In this regard the farmers again set the norm for Ireland.

The largest proportions of the aged among the farmers prevail, furthermore, among the small farmers. One can expect this fact, related as it is to the greater emigration of this class. The statistics correlating the size of the farm and age group proportions bear out the expectation.

Table 3, based again upon census records,[3] expresses the relative percentages of males over seventy years of age and of males thirty to forty-four (the age groups in which emigration comes to an end) in the total of males ranked by age among farmers and farmers' assisting relatives upon the various sizes of farms, for the whole of the Free State:

TABLE 3

OLD AGE AND SIZE OF FARMS

Farm Size in Acres	Percentage of Farmers and Assisting Relatives over 70 Years of Age	Percentage of Farmers and Assisting Relatives Aged 30–44
1–5	13	10
5–10	11	13
10–15	10	11
15–30	9	12
30–50	8	12
50–100	7½	10
100–200	7	16
200–over	1	24

The table reveals a constant diminution of the percentage of the old as the size of farms increases. In other words, the

[3] *Census of Population, 1926*, vol. V, pt. II, Table 7.

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smaller the farm the greater the likelihood that it supports old people. Since we are dealing with census records of occupations actually engaged in at the time of numeration, the figures again point to the fact that larger proportions of old people are still active upon the small farms than elsewhere. On the small farms, then, the old do not retire. That there should be no constant increase in the percentages of the adult age groups does not detract from the validity of the conclusion. The inconsistency of the percentages can be referred to the differential emigration rates of the inhabitants of farms of various sizes. If emigration takes place at different ages and in greater or less proportions from different-sized farm holdings, as other figures not germane in this connection point out, that fact will make it impossible to select any one age group to illustrate the corresponding increase of the proportion of adult males to aged males in the farm size categories.

The table confirms the point. It is among the small holders that the greatest number of old people survive. The peasant population is again responsible for a striking peculiarity of Irish demography.

That the peculiarity is a peasant manifestation can be demonstrated upon a narrower stage. In the various counties of the Free State, the same statistical differences appear between rural areas and small holdings on one hand and urban areas and large holdings on the other. Old people are relatively numerous in the former, relatively few in the latter. In Clare, to take one example, we have seen already that the aggregate rural areas count a larger proportion of the old than do the aggregate urban areas (towns of 1,500 or more inhabitants). The Clare rural districts in which larger holdings are more numerous, Meelick and Ballyvaughan, count 2.4 per cent and 3.1 per cent respectively of their people over seventy-five, both male and female. Those in which larger holdings are relatively fewer, e.g., Tulla and

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Ennistymon, count larger percentages (4.6 and 4.0 respectively). Here again, within the bounds of the county, the demographic peculiarity by which the old are so numerous is a characteristic of the small-farm population. The presence of large farmers in any district is enough to weigh proportions away from the peasant norm. Comparisons of occupations by age within the county yield the same result. We need not detail them here.[4]

The demographic peculiarity which gives Ireland so large a proportion of the aged in her population becomes more marked when other nations are compared. The Irish death rate is rather low. Most strikingly, only one civilized country keeping census records of age distribution surpasses Ireland in the large proportion of aged individuals. That country is France, which in 1926 counted 9.4 per cent of its citizens over sixty-five years of age, barely topping the Irish figure of 9.2 per cent. Other countries ranged far below France and the Free State, Scandinavian and Baltic countries coming comparatively near, with such figures as that of 8.8 per cent for Sweden and 7.6 per cent for Norway. Industrial Germany and England (with Wales) occupied a middle place with figures of 5.7 per cent and 6.6 per cent respectively, and such "new" countries as Australia and the United States, where the percentages are 4.4 per cent and 4.7 per cent, brought up the rear. These figures (see Table 4) were taken from national censuses of various dates in the various countries in the period 1920–1926 and compiled for the Irish census primarily from the "International Health Year Book 1928 (League of Nations)" and *Aperçu de la démographie des divers pays du monde, 1925* (International Institute of Statistics).

Ireland and France share eminence as abodes of the old. But they reach that eminence through different courses. A comparison of the expectancy of life in the two countries,

[4] *Census of Population, 1926*, vol. V, pt. II, Table 12A, County Clare.

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those of Ireland. There low life expectancies go hand in hand with a large proportion of the aged. In Ireland high expectancies, especially at older ages, where they are among the highest in the world for both sexes, go hand in hand with the same phenomenon.

For this reason one cannot appeal too directly to emigration as the determinant of the demographic condition. The Irish countryside is relatively full of old people, not only because so many of the young adults have left, but also because the old people tend to live long lives.

Within this complexity of factors, emigration, a high percentage of the old, and late marriage, the small farmers set the norms for the whole country. Now we can recognize that high expectancies of life also belong to them. A comparison of life expectancies among the three provinces of the Free State will suffice to bear out the fact. Males of Connacht can expect more years of life at all ages than males of Munster; the males of Munster can expect more than those of Leinster; and those of Leinster can expect least of all three. Thus the provinces show higher expectancies the smaller their farms.

Many causes have been advanced to account for Irish longevity. The country people live long and die often very old indeed. Diet, climate, natural selection through infant mortality, racial heredity, have all been suggested by various writers. Probably all of these factors are involved, in one way or another, but the problem is one that has faced students of peasantries often.

The authors have no single efficient cause to offer. The question that poses itself for them is one of effect rather than of cause. The existence of such a large proportion of the old among small farmers presents a problem in the organization of behavior among human beings. Nevertheless, might not the longevity of peasants be after all a simple matter? In the Irish case we shall see that they live long

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888 because they have much to live for. In their own sphere of life, they are honored. They have power.

888 The problem is one which must be referred to the small farmers themselves. As before, it is a question of their sentiments and their conducts and any analysis of their action in the matter must follow upon the presentation of observed generalities in their social life.

Some of these generalities present themselves to the eye immediately. As we saw in the discussion of the house and family, there is a great deal of everyday conduct which expresses the differences of social valuation of age and which one age group follows in its intercourse with many others. This conduct, the sentiments which accompany it, and the attitudes and verbalizations with which it is associated, can be seen every day in the lives of the people. It is part of the *mores* of the community. The child learns it as he grows up upon the small farms. It prepares him to meet all others in the local community who are of substantially the same status, habits of life, and speech as the members of his own family. It provides a scale of valuation in which each individual can place any other within the bounds of variation existing in the local community, and upon which both can build sure expectancies of conduct. On another facet it gives each and every individual a place among individuals occupying similar places. In making status in this way, it governs behavior in high degree, imposing bounds upon it and exacting conformity. We have already seen something of this conduct. In the discussion of the house interior and the grouping and seating of individuals by rough similarity of age, we have seen what might be termed one focal point within the system of relations which is characterized by this conduct. The old people in the farm family occupied that point. Place of honor and privilege within the household is theirs. In their families they are objects of respect and a mild sort of veneration on the part of all younger members.

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They occupy this place and receive this respect from other persons than their relatives. This respect is as much folk custom as the norms of family life. The community can on occasion enforce it upon the family members through gossip, verbal censure, and, more rarely, direct intervention in the person of the priest. 888 626

The vocabulary of the countryman and a great many of the judgments and comments he makes upon his surroundings express the valuations of the community upon age. In the discussion of the house interior it was remarked that the conducts of the different age groups were too "natural" to the farmers to evoke verbal recognition among them. The statement is true only in a sense. The farmers make no explicit recognition of the organization of behavior upon the basis of age. But they are never silent upon the implications of such organization as it affects individual conduct in daily life. 888 561

More cogent, perhaps, for our understanding are the many expressions which arise from day to day based upon the speaker's place within an age grade. A great part of the constant talk which flows back and forth among the friends and neighbors who pass their lives within a rural community takes its form so. Particularly is this true of discussion of the past, a favorite topic and one which came very frequently indeed to the authors' ears. Gossip and personalities are as frequent a theme, and a speaker rarely fails to qualify the object of his remarks with an appropriate definition of his relative age. Even to intimates a man is referred to as "old John" or "young Michael." 888 561 521

Perhaps it is the discussion of the past which illustrates best partiality for the things of one's own age. The older men and women describe the "old days" with enthusiasm and regret. The "old times" are a ready topic among the country people, or rather among the older ones. Many an evening an old person can be got to tell of the "old times." 888 521

1 [i.e., the aged. – Analyst]

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888 521 He or she takes little warming to the task. They were hard times, even "bad times" of famine and death, but the speakers throw a glow of courage and glamour round them. Even the mention of the lack of tools, draft animals, shoes, and many other amenities of present existence evokes comments such as "Weren't they the poor old times?" and "Wasn't it hard the work they had to do in the old days?" Phrases of murmured commiseration and headshaking regret or pity are not without a tinge of pride for listener and teller alike. Remembered necessities in the eyes of the old people who tell the tale are now feats of endurance and strength to which the new generation could never aspire. That is the point for those who tell and those who listen. Where could you get a young man today to walk from Corrofin to Ballinasloe in his bare feet forty miles and back over the stony roads? Where is the woman today who could shoulder a creel turf and carry it a hundred yards out through the bog mud to the famine road before the Board put in the road to the bog above Dunnagore?

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888 521 262 Even the meager diet of the old times is remembered with a certain nostalgic pride. An old man, called upon one winter evening, began his remarks upon the theme characteristically:

> In the old days people used to have a maize gruel "stirabout" for breakfast, but you couldn't get any of the young people to eat it now. There was a potato bread, *stampai*, and it was very good too. The people in the old times had great teeth and, when they died, they would have every one left in their heads. Their teeth would be stronger than a horse's. When the people ate potatoes and bread three times a day, they were healthier and lived to a ripe old age. Now with all the better food, they are not as well.

888 521 Such a belief rises very frequently to the lips of the old people who remember the days of the past either in their own or their parents' experience. The implication is clear. The young people, the new generation, are not so strong

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nor so hardy nor even so good-natured as those who went before. 888 521

Discussions of the present fall into the same vein. Just as, for the older members of the community, the past reflects their glories and is a convenient vehicle for the expression of their superiority, so the present can be measured against the past in the same terms, usually only to be found lacking.

Often the expressions take a different turn. They become that universal complaint, the younger generation.

> Young people today are not what they used to be [said one old farmer in the course of a general discussion of the golden age that was his youth]. They spend money for fags, they have to be gambling every night, or else go to a dance, and, if they happen to win a turkey, they will nearly shake the house down when they come in. There is no good in the country when things go on like this. In the old days a man used always to be out repairing his stone walls, cleaning his land, or doing something. They expect everything to be done for them.

He paused for an illustration, selected one from among his own cronies, and swept volubly on:

> Wasn't Keane out every night with his cattle putting them in small fields and late in the night? He would have his supper waiting for him when he came in, but he would take off his shoes so not to waken his father, and then to bed. Wasn't he up early in the morning and out working? They cleared a nice piece of land in the common. He kept it all until he had cattle up by Ballywaughan. You wouldn't get any of the young people to do that now. There's no control of them.

But even among his listeners, all of them "old" like himself, the young people had some defense:

> But there has to be some fun for the young people. If they don't enjoy themselves, there is no heart in them. You can't expect them to be always at home.

But these statements express more than a mere rivalry between young and old. They spring from a feeling of

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mutuality between young and old which transcends rivalry. The old days were better, among other reasons, because the dependence of the young upon the old was greater. The present is less attractive because the young no longer help the old as they should. Both facets of such mutuality may be expressed, even though the speaker, if he is old, casts it in the form of mistrust and dislike for the young. The whole of experience can be brought within this scheme of attitudes. To give an example, let an old fellow, an opponent of the present regime of Gaelicization in Ireland, recite his misgivings about the school system:

> I am patriotic and it may be a bad thing to say but I think the school system they have now is bad and the teaching of Irish is bad. In my day and before, a man might go to school when he could – maybe for only three months out of the twelve – but he would know more than they get now when they go to school all the time. The old people learned more then. When the child finished school, he could be expected to read a newspaper to the old people and to write a letter for them, or to do sums – and he would do it well.

His complaint is much longer, but enough has been given to show his mistrust of a schooling which to his mind makes no provision for the mutuality mentioned. This mutuality was and is strongest in the realm of farm work. The farm family demands the coöperation of all its members. No less, the community makes its valuation of young and old upon that coöperation. General discussions among the country people bring out this fact again and again. To illustrate again, two "old fellows," adult farmers with families, could agree upon a formula running somewhat as follows:

> The men were stronger in the past, they worked harder, while you try to get any young person to do as much work as the old men now and they would laugh at you. The young people today seem to see how little they can do rather than how much, while

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the old men would strip down and compete with one another to see who can do the most work. 888 521

Yet they were later forced to admit:

The people in the old times were not as knacky as they are now. Isn't it true that they used to have the horse in a stall feeding him while the man would be out with a spade turning over the garden?

Most of these allusions are to the realm of farm work. Just as the rivalry between father and son in the farm family is most intimate and most constant in the economy which they pursue together, so the expression of the conflict between the generations in the community at large takes the same form and finds its expression within the frame of the work that the community must do to live. 888 578 561

Naturally enough, the young people do not express these attitudes. They do not agree with their elders on the score of their own shortcomings. But they have a good deal to say, among themselves, from their own point of vantage. They express the reverse of the medal. The past is not so golden to them, and there are many among their elders whose idiosyncrasies can be sweepingly condemned with some such criticism as "old fool" and "old blatherer." Like the son already quoted who gave his father his head in farm work and listened patiently for orders, only to follow his own devices, they have their own valuations of themselves in which youth and strength outweigh age and wisdom.

But within a system of values in which the old represent the nexus of kinship and bear honor within the community, the young people do not see the issue so clearly. There is as much respect as there is antagonism in their verbal assessment of the older men and women. The young people recognize themselves as forming a distinct group with interests and sentiments of its own, opposed in the scheme of rural life to the elders. They use the word "we" and oppose it to "them" for the old. They recognize places, pursuits, 578 561

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578 561 and forms of activity as their own and find much more interest in them than in those of the other group. The young men greet the suggestion that they should take their place in the gathering of old men in something of the tone of derision which they reserve for women. But the rivalry in their sentiments between respect and egocentric feeling, like the controls imposed by their parents to keep them respectfully silent in the presence of their elders, imposes a silence upon them. Consequently, one cannot find among them the voluble expression of attitudes based upon one's belonging to a certain relative age. One must look for it rather in particular expressions of annoyance, boredom, and chafing against restraint.

Expressions of sentiment about age are the products of a system of values upon it in which the individual makes the valuation from the place he occupies. They express not only a grouping of individuals of similar age but a mutuality between groups so composed. And, too, they form a scaffolding of categorization in which each person takes his relative place.

561 554 551 888 Let us examine one instance at least of this categorization. The community in rural Ireland bestows many names and titles. They are ephemeral. They have no currency outside the immediate circle of life in the townland or village. At best, they spread through a parish. They are nicknames and express no more than the individual's particular place in the hearts of his fellows. Yet some of them are generic epithets. Like "old" and "young," they may prefix a name and designate the more closely the personality of the person named. Like "boy" and "old fellow," they may express broad categories of a man's age and its associated behavior, and may designate not so much a biologic or physiognomic reality as a sociological status. The words "saint" and *cailleach* are of the last kind of epithet, in rural usage. In the brogue they refer only to the old. In strict philology

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both are metaphorical, for the brogue knows and makes use of the words in their "proper" meanings. *Cailleach*, the Gaelic word, means properly "hag" or "witch." "Saint," of course, is the canonized saint of the church.

The small farmer who refers to this or that contemporary and neighbor as a "saint" or a *cailleach* is making a social and moral categorization. He is not concerned with purity of diction. The old man or woman, who follows a behavior proper to his or her status and is an ornament to the community, is a "saint." The old man or woman who does not is the object of distrust and dislike. His or her departures from accepted conduct cause disturbance and strife in the community. Accordingly, he or she is a *cailleach*. Thus, in one North Clare community a "stranger" whom the community disliked was a *cailleach*, despite the feminine gender of the word. Likewise, the old man who lived in harmony with his son upon a farm already transferred, a leader in the village whose oldest hale inhabitant he was, could be described by a neighbor as follows:

> The old man is a typical Irishman. He is a saint and there isn't a thought against anyone in him. He is always in a good humor and, if he went to town to have a drink, he could stand in the one place till he dropped. He is as gentle and harmless as a child, and it will be a great loss to the village when he is gone. He and Roche [a neighbor] are two level-headed farmers and they have met every sort of trouble. If you are in doubt about any farm advice, you can go to them and they will give you as good advice as you can get, because both of them have been successful farmers. It would pay a young man to listen to them.

"Saintliness" of this kind is a matter of one's filling one's role. But it is one's role for the village that counts. There is nothing individual in the canon of conduct. The young person who follows ardently the conventions laid down for him is not a "saint" even if he is exceedingly chaste and religious. It is the word "holy," not "saint," which comes

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561 554 551 888 to the countryman's lips in describing him. Nor is a young person a *cailleach*, for, like "saint," the term applies only to the old. Both terms refer to sociological age rather than chronological age, for those old people who occupy the role of "old" only because they have been forced into that position within the farm family can also be "saints." Thus the elder sister described in the discussion of farm marriage, who occupied the west room and the hob by the fire, was known in the neighborhood as a "saint."

Relative age makes a difference in status in the local community. It fits one into a definite place in a scheme of values. And lastly, as in the description of "saint," it equips one with a definite role in communal life which one can fill well or ill.

561 554 888 The conduct that reflects this state of affairs thrusts itself into the observer's view again and again in rural Ireland wherever he meets countrymen of different ages together. The relations between young and old in the community, like those between parent and child within the family, are understandable in the light of the roles of such broad age groups in terms of status.

First, there is the matter of privilege and precedence. To an outsider there may seem little enough in the countryman's way of life to allow for such distinctions. But from within, that little looms much greater. The old fellow, the men of full status who head farms and farm-working corporations of sons — those who have turned or are about to turn over their control to a younger generation — are accorded a very real precedence. In their own houses we have seen it to be very great. In the community at large it is little less so. A farmer visiting another takes his place at the hearth seat. His sons lag behind and occupy the back of the room. When the community gathers in the wake house to honor the dead, the places by the fire go to the older men and women. The boys and girls must group themselves behind. They come forward only when called upon. At

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country "stations" [8] the elder men and women file in for confession and come forward for Communion first. On the road to the shop, to church, or to the fair, the young man must keep pace and the elder may call him to his side.

The relation shows itself best perhaps in the constant discussions that are the breath of life for the countryman. No work is too pressing to prevent the countryman from "stopping on the road to pass the time of day." In the rural community such personal communion is an indispensable bridge across the social and physical space separating farm from farm. In all such discussion it is the elder men who may regulate length and subject of conversation. When groups form in pubs, in one another's houses on evening visits, before and after mass in the churchyard, the enthralling game of presenting argument, choosing sides, directing the flow of talk, belongs to the older men. The young men must listen in. At such times the important news of the countryside disseminates itself. Political judgments are formed, and the ephemeral decisions of daily life are made. In all this the boys are silent listeners. It is a bold young man who enters an opinion of his own.

Second, there is the matter of the contacts of the community with the outside world. The elder men, these same father-owners; represent the interests of the community before priest, schoolmaster, merchant, cattleman, and government official. The younger men hang back, ready to be brought in when the elders want them, listening in and keeping their own counsel. Much of this we have already indicated, but it is necessary to cite it here again in order to round out the picture.

The relation extends to very small matters indeed. The better cup of tea, the bigger piece of bread, the glass of

[8] In country districts remote from the parish church masses are said in the private houses of parishioners once or twice a year in order to allow the performance of Easter or Christmas duty by those confined to their homes through age or sickness or other cause. These are "country stations," important religious events in every townland.

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561 554 888 276 whiskey, the two eggs instead of one, the pipeful of tobacco, go to the elder men. This last, tobacco, is no small matter where even now tobacco is still expensive enough to require careful husbanding. It is a custom in the country districts to pass the pipe around among one's intimates and guests for testing, for praise, and to the accompaniment of formulae still often magical in nature. But the pipe does not go to the young man. He must content himself with an occasional "fag." When there is little, the young man can go without.

For illustration there is the anecdote that one Clare farmer tells:

> During the time when tobacco was scarce [the war], an old man came into Sullivan's [shop] and asked for a half-quarter [cut of tobacco]. The Missus told him to go [get it] where he always bought it. He was very cast down. After he was out the door, I said to her she should give him some tobacco because a man who is used to it all his life would miss it greatly if he can't get it. "Let the young bucks go," said I; "they don't want it. But an old fellow wants it badly." She looked at me and says, "Frank, are you serious?" "I am, faith," says I; "call the old man back." He was just a few paces down the road. She did and his face lighted up and he couldn't thank her enough.

561 554 888 Informal as these differences are, they are nevertheless powerful agents in the regulation of conduct among the small farmers. Without them, the flavor of country life is lost. Without them, too, one can gain no understanding of the never-varying annual round of social activity in the country districts nor any inkling of the importance of those informal activities of social intercourse which fill the non-working lives of the countrymen. It is here that social patterns of behavior upon age difference assume importance as controls of human activity. It is here that the roles the age grades play in the organization of the community reveal themselves most clearly.

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621 487 paths crisscrosses the fields in all directions from house to house and across the countryside beyond.

887 573 Old man O'Donoghue's house, the third in the village, is the "old men's house." Mrs. Ruin, a neighbor, will tell you what the old man means to the men of the village:

> The old man is getting weaker and when he is gone out of it the village won't be the same. He will be the greatest loss. It is round his fireplace the men gather. Where will they go when he dies?

But the question has not yet arisen for the men who meet there nearly every night, particularly in winter, when the evening is long and the work day its shortest. Soon after the evening meal they begin to gather. Occasionally this or that habitué may not come, but it is always the same group of men who stride across the threshold with a "God bless all here," and take their accustomed places.

888 542 O'Donoghue has the place of honor in the chair to the right of the fire. He is an old man now and no longer active beyond the house door. He lives here with his nephew, a man of fifty, and his nephew's wife. The couple have no children and must depend upon their own efforts in the working of the farm. It is a good farm and the nephew works it well, deferring to the old man in occasional matters.

888 573 521 O'Donoghue is the "judge" in this gathering. In the nightly discussions which take place around his fireplace, he has a judicial role. He is regarded as a wise man to whose opinions all must defer. Usually they know he contents himself with a word of affirmation, or now and again a slow and measured judgment upon a current topic. He initiates nothing and only occasionally adds a non-judicial bit to the conversation. Then he shows himself to have a fund of funny and apt anecdotes as good as any other man's. He rarely generalizes. When he does, his remarks deal with the "old times."

Silent as this shrewd old man is, his is the central position

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888 573 521 in the group. Comments and questions are phrased through him. He takes the preferred verbal bit and passes it on among the others. And when agreement is finally reached, it is his quiet "So it is" that settles the point for good.

573 O'Halloran sits on the hob across the hearth from him. He is the "drawer-down" in the scheme of jocular titles which includes most of the group. O'Halloran is a man of fifty but mature. He owns a farm a little better perhaps [542] than most, just beyond the village. He works it with his wife and six children, the eldest of whom is nearing twenty. As he has no parents left alive, he is the "old man" and the man of the house. But individually he is more. "He has a [484 great head on him," they say. He has had a somewhat wider 446] experience, once having traveled as a salesman over the roads of southern Ireland. Yet, in spite of the fact that he is occasionally a little skeptical and his politics are somewhat suspect to the villagers, who are today De Valera men to a man, he is emphatically one of them.

573 521 His title of "drawer-down" is an apt one. O'Halloran seeks information. He most frequently of them all brings up points of interest and questions of the day. These he addresses to O'Donoghue, who passes them on for general discussion. Like all the rest of them his illustrations are apt and his anecdotes definite and precise, but his chief role is to "draw the talk down" to common levels of interest which allow all to take part.

573 521 589 *O'Loughlin usually occupies the* other hob. He has no real place here. He is a bachelor, aged *fifty* or so, and, though he comes here, he has little to say. He is seemingly silent all the time, and he breaks his silence only to add to unanimity. For O'Loughlin is very poor and lives alone. Having no family, he can neither coor nor work his land to best advantage. And occasionally he works on the road, breaking stones with the boys of the village. Just as he has no voice here, he has no title either.

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contests, and playful roles of solemn occasions, such as acting as strawboys (mummers) at weddings. But all these activities, in which the old members of the community do not directly participate, are alike in their playing no great part in organizing other elements in the community than the young people themselves. They serve other functions.

All these activities bind the young men, the young people, together in common interests. They provide them with a scope of action in which they are comparatively free, yet which keeps them divorced from the seats of a power over community life which is denied them. In this sphere they may develop complex norms, valuations, and conducts.

But such developments do not serve primarily to knit the community as a whole the more firmly. They are associated with the lesser prestige of the young people. Consequently, the old men's house comes to have in contrast a double function. It unites the old men in much the same way as the gamble and the dance unite the young men, in fact even more strongly. But it does so in terms of the old men's common position as recipients of the respect of the community and in terms of their individual positions as integrators of their families. The difference is structural. The activities of young men unite them across family and clique lines even from one community to the next. But those of the old men do more; they unite young and old as well. The integration of the young men is a looser and less inclusive one, even though the numbers ephemerally joined in gamble and dance may be greater.

In such a system of integrations, that of the old men has the greater prestige. A great gambler or a great dancer wins wide respect. But the distinction is short-lived. It is a nine days' or a nine years' wonder. It bestows great prestige among one's fellows, but it removes one very little, if at all, from one's subordinate, less valued place as "boy" in the community.

Where such is the case, the individual's progression

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through rural life under normal circumstances is not toward a greater and greater prominence in the activities of the young men's group. Rather, there comes a time when one must break away altogether. One faces perforce a new orientation of sentiment and a new kind of behavior. Growing old brings many more changes than the physiological.

The case of the newcomer, John Quin, already described, shows the necessary changes. In Rynamona it is brought out very clearly in the clique to which he first belonged and to which we have referred at various times, calling it once the "intermediate."

The clique we name so met at the house of one Joseph McMahon, more commonly known as Oscair (the Hercules of Irish saga) for his physical strength. Oscair was a rural carpenter with only a very small plot of garden and his house. But he was a good singer, a jokester, and a repository of folk tale, though he was not much past forty. He lived just at the edge of the slope leading from Kilnaboy Commons down to Rynamona. The townland was what would be called in urban sociology an "interstitial area." It was higher, rougher, and more craggy than Rynamona and Kilnaboy, lying between them. Its inhabitants were descendants of people evicted from round about who had squatted there. Most of them were "died out and left," and the place was always poor. It acted as a sort of outlying fringe of Rynamona.

The men who collected round Oscair's fire were aged thirty-five to sixty. Just as their ages were intermediate between fully old and fully young, so was their habit here. They very seldom played cards. Talk was the order of the day, enlivened by Oscair's humor and ballads. A few of them spoke of the affairs of the village with some weight. The rest did not. Those who came were as follows:

a. Young Mackey, from the village, the man recently married, still too young for the old men's house.

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b. Moroney, the sixty-year-old, "strongest" (richest) farmer of the village. One of the few who spoke with weight.
c. Young Roche, son of the very old man, still unmarried but entirely in charge of the farm he would soon inherit.
d. O'Sullivan, a herdsman, from near-by, who was a stranger in the community but had won himself a place, despite his being a landless man of sixty-five, by acting as the local veterinarian. He spoke, too, with weight.
e. John Quin, already described, who spoke here with weight.
f. Two forty-year-old Pilkington brothers, unmarried, from the Commons, very small farmers, most often silent.
g. Oscair himself, whose role was to entertain.

Of these men it can be seen that only Mackey, Moroney, and John Quin could make the transition to full farm-owning, farm-father status of old men. Mackey had years to pass before he could so do. His eldest child was very young and he himself not long in possession of his farm. John Quin, in a somewhat anomalous position, could and did move onward. In doing so, as we described, he felt it necessary to break away completely from this group. This he did, with the result that the group, itself never stable, fell to pieces. Moroney, as we remember, had a disagreement with the villagers and would not attend the old men's gatherings.

What was it then that brought these men together? The authors could get no answer from the men themselves, other than their amusement with Oscair and, in Moroney's case, a guardedly phrased dislike of the villagers. Yet, through observation and interview in the community, it became clear that they were all passing through a similar transition. Oscair's visitors were not a stable clique, nor too faithful in attendance. Both young Roche and young Mackey were still going occasionally to the young men's meeting at the other Roche's house, but both felt too great responsibilities for gambling and cards. John Quin gambled heartily enough

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but was more and more impatient with the "playboys" of young fellows. Old Moroney was gruff and lonely. The others were neighbors of Oscair's and, being poor or landless men, felt awkward going elsewhere. O'Sullivan could visit as he pleased, for, as the local "vet," his word carried weight, but, always a stranger in sentiment, he felt most at home here.

The intermediate clique was a product of similarity of interests, in contrast to the interests of other better organized groups. Its members were in some way or another a little different from the ordinary old or young of Rynamona. Some of them were remote topographically, but not all. Some were without full community status, but not all, and some of a transitional age.

Oscair's house was thus a sort of catchall for those whose position in Rynamona was not clearly defined. It was intermediate between the clearly defined groups, and for the small farmers such as Mackey, Roche, and Quin, was a halfway stage in their advance from the status of young men to that of old.

The progression of which this is the halfway stage is an upward one, metaphorically speaking. It leads no longer to a greater role as "playboy" but toward full family and community status. It leads to a new behavior and new personal desires, more highly valued. One's discarded status and one's discarded behavior fall away into lesser esteem. In terms of this progression we can understand the attitude of the old men on the behavior of the young ones. It is a *transitory, impermanent, unimportant thing.* It is a codology." "When they grow older," one old man said, "and become married, they will meet just as we do."

What shows itself in Oscair's clique is a transitional state. For a moment were gathered here those who could move upward, like John Quin. Gradually, they could attain full status. Oscair's hearth for them was a roadside resting place.

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With these intermediates were gathered the representatives of another anomalous social place. Both Oscair and O'Sullivan, the "vet," were important figures in the community. Their occupations and their skills won them respect and admiration over the countryside. O'Sullivan, the older man, was free to come and go wherever he might wish. But both were "landless" men. They could never attain full peasant status. In the identifications of Irish familism, they were condemned to celibacy. Neither could feel comfortable in the old men's *cuaird*. There was no place for them except, as Oscair's behavior showed, as playboys and entertainers. So they too must occupy an interstice in the structural alignments of rural social life.

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353 *Tír na nÓg*, and Avalon, the island of apple trees
773 which the Greeks knew as the Garden of the
776 Hesperides, and which in a Christian rendering the blessed Saint Brendan may have reached, lies to the west in the setting sun. It is very likely that in this folk practice there survives nearly all that remains of an elaborate early mythology.

Alas for our questioning, no one remembers Avalon in Luogh, *Tír na nÓg* is a dying legend. If you ask the old men about the west, tales of sunken cities and strange sea-creatures greet your ears; ask about the fairies and fairy paths and you get, first, indignant denials of such degrading belief, and then anecdotes, tales, incidents, which illustrate their character and their power for good and evil. Ask about the furniture of this room, and you learn only that it is the right and fitting thing that the objects fill this room and no other. No one can trace the continuity; tradition is felt in the mass rather than in the particular.

We are left then with what we can hear and observe about the present. To question upon anything else is to get nowhere; it merely starts a chain of obscuring generalities more inspired by the question than by what Luogh feels and thinks and does.

353 But the case is not hopeless. If one casts one's
888 reliance upon observations and questions in the present, new facts appear. The west room figures in marriage. In the contracts drawn up it is often

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mentioned by name. It is the room reserved for themselves by the old people, the father and mother of the groom; they reserve it for their own use after they turn over the farm to their sons at marriage.

Ask about this and more information comes to you. It is into this room that the old couple move. The room is theirs. Younger members of the household dare not enter it except with permission. Indeed, it is the old couple who throw their aura around the room; the respect owed them is very like that felt toward the room they occupy. Here one enters a new field of behaviour and attitude in human relations. The honour and command of the old couple do not leave them altogether when they retire from active ownership of the farm. They enter a new status of which the associations round the west room are one reflexion.

So it goes, the new questions and new observations lead not to a prehistory or a chain of continuities, but to an ever-widening number of living associations which colour the relations of men and women, old and young. They lead to a realization of the laws and custom by which the small farmers find their lives ordered. In this instance, the west room of Luogh is a dim survival, perhaps, of Avalon and *Tír na nÓg*. But more certainly it is a focal point in a system of values some little of which we have begun to glimpse. Old custom in the west room thus gives

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old as the Celtic sagas. The belief is spread, of course, far beyond Ireland. The Neapolitan fisherman paints his boat against the evil eye, the Balkan woman embroiders her petticoat to ward off evil and curses. The West African sorcerer knows the technique to perfection; our own Pennsylvania Dutch 'hexes' are modern practitioners. For the belief belongs to the infinite realm of magic.

If one were satisfied with the bald collector's statement, one would be content to leave the young man in such company. But by inquiring more deeply into the incident, one can look into the situation in which he suffered. If the belief can be seen at work in a situation which can be readily assessed, then it will serve better as a guide toward understanding the life in which it can still operate.

The situation has many elements. In the first place, the details of the young man's trouble are simple enough. In working a scythe round the bush-choked wall of a field, he fell in such a way as to drive a sliver of bush into his eye. We should call it, I suppose, a simple accident and pity him his bad luck.

But the small farmers among whom he lived wove another world of explanation round that eye. Gradually the tale unfolds. Perhaps the loss of the eye is a punishment. For the young man was not entirely blameless. An unvoiced suspicion had pointed his way.

For there had been a few weeks before what used

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to be called, in more heated days, 'an agrarian outrage'. Two old men, bachelors living alone, had been fired upon in the night. Some one had pumped gunshot through the window of their poor cabin, high up the mountainside. As was probably intended, the shots buried themselves harmlessly in the cabin floor. But they awakened the old men, and frightened them badly.

The occurrence shocked the community. The two old men were harmless creatures; they were 'saints' in the country phrase. Who would want to injure them or drive them out?

The country-people had their suspicions; but the police could get nothing from them. There was nothing for the inspector to do but report another 'agrarian intimidation'. Even if he too knew, there was nothing to do; he could prove nothing without witnesses.

The country-people kept silence for good reason, from their point of view. If their suspicions were correct, the matter was a private affair, a family squabble. It was no business of theirs.

For the old men, by the standards of rural kinship, were not entirely blameless either. They held a farm they did not work. They took none of their kinsmen in. They should long ago have given up their land. One of them should have brought a girl in, married her and raised a family. They should have passed the land on to their sons, or failing sons, they should have brought in a nephew

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or other boy of their kindred. Then they could have turned the farm over to the boy, when they felt themselves too old, and let him marry, in order that their kindred's name continue and grow in land.

But the old men had never had a 'taste for marrying'. They were victims themselves of a too-intense loyalty. I say victims, because their loyalty had been narrowest of all. Their old mother had lived too long in her turn. She had never decided which one should get the land and bring in a girl. Perhaps their father might have decided, had he lived, but their mother survived him by many years. Neither of them wished to leave her side and neither would leave to make room for the other. When at last the mother died, the two bachelor sons were already old; they were long past marrying and set in celibate ways. They lingered on in an ever narrower round.

In the community they were 'saints', as I have said; they were 'no trouble to man or beast'. Yet, from another point of view, they were not doing the 'natural' thing; they made no provisions for their kinsmen; they did not pass on the land to those to whom by country right it should go. They refused to fill their proper roles in life. No wonder, then, that their cabin was a byword for neglect and disrepair. The countrymen would tell you, in a moralizing vein, it had become so 'for lack of a woman's hand'.

But to censure them for their misspent lives was

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no affair of the community's. The kindred of the old men were the aggrieved parties. Their name suffered and their sons were landless and unborn; land belonging to them lay idle. So, whoever did the shooting—perhaps he had a reason for it. Suspicion might point here and there, but whatever measures the kinsmen might take to remedy their grievance concerned the kinsmen alone. Let those to whom the old men's duty lay see that they followed it. It was best to say nothing beyond one's immediate circle.

But the community could not entirely condone the shooting either. It was a bad thing, no good could come of it. To disturb the peace in such a way shook the security of them all; it gave the district 'a bad name'.

So, when a new event took place, the community found outlet for its censure. When the young man lost his eye, the community was ready for this reaffirmation of its threatened values. For the young man was one of the aggrieved kindred; he was a landless cousin's son; to him and his brothers the old men's farm should have gone. In the loss of his eye, the community felt he paid his penalty. No one knew just how it was inflicted; one does not attempt to unveil such mysteries. Their force is too great, too little controllable. Some felt the 'old man's curse' had done it, some felt that the priest might have done it, for the old men had appealed to him. Some blamed a vague mysterious power in the bush

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the young man cut. Whatever it was, the fact was plain. Only a week or so after the shooting, the young man lost his eye. His crime found a sure punishment in a realm in which all could agree without running risk of retaliation at the hands of the disputing parties.

I have couched this incident in vague, unprecise language for a reason. In the realm of folk-belief outlines are not clear and concepts are not precise. No one could formulate logically this retribution which put out the young man's eye. Nevertheless all felt it. And a moralist among them could sum up: "It is right to respect the old people".

The second example, then, points in the same direction as the first. Both 'west room' and the 'old man's curse' reflect age-old tradition. But both reveal a system of values which rules life in the present. That system of values dictates attitudes and reflects itself in behaviour. For example, neither the young man who may or may not have done the shooting, nor the old men who were shot at, were free agents. They both followed interests growing out of the values of rural life. Sometimes, as in this case, these interests conflict. If open fighting is not to tear life asunder, ways must be found to resolve the conflict, to find a formula of agreement, as the diplomats say.

I have tried in the last of my two examples to show you something of the movements of this sort and something of the agreement which can be

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584 675 will. Reforms in land tenure have made it necessary recently to give an age-old custom proper legality, since the transfer of the farm is involved.

584 675 888 In the 'writings' the father of the groom makes over the farm and all its appurtenances to his son. In return, the girl's fortune goes to him. The father also makes provision for his own maintenance and that of his wife. It is his abdication, and like Charles V, he keeps only one monastery out of a vast empire for himself. He usually reserves the right to the 'grass of a cow', his keep, the use of the hearth, and the use of a room in the house. That room is the 'west room' already described, the best in the house. Thus, the cycle of life on the farm is completing itself. He and his wife step down from active command.

584 593 In payment for his abdication, he receives the fortune of the girl. A fair arrangement, we should say. But we should be wrong; it is much more. True to the obligations of his social role, he may not use it entirely for himself. The Irish small farmer does not retire, like the Iowan, to sunny California and the Townsend plan. He must meet the interests of the group. Ordinarily, the other children have been stalwart workers in the farm family corporation. They are not to be 'settled on the land'; some other provision must be made. They may come forward now for their long due reward and their corporate share.

Here the purposes behind the match show them-

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ing townland) was home from Australia one summer, looking a fine cut of a man with a great new coat and a fine hat on him. I saw him one day when we were all in Considine's shop for the old-age pension and knew who he was from the pictures of him. (After they had established recognition and struck up a friendship) he asked could he take the boy (my second son) out to Australia with him, and he would put him behind his bar (he had a hotel out there). I said yes, he could have him.

"After this fellow went back to Australia, he sent over £50 for passage for Seumas. But didn't Seumas' sisters write from Boston and they swearing that if I let their brother go off from them to Australia I'd never hear from them again. So Seumas went out to America to his sisters. I sent back the £50, and sure wasn't it the devil's own work sending it back."

So much for the external change which the match brings. What now can we learn of the internal change and the new internal equilibrium that change brings?

The transfer of the land to the son who marries carries with it a drastic reformation in the relations of the household members who remain. The headship of the parental couple is profoundly modified. The 'old people' move into a new status, that of old age. For both the man and the woman it means an abandonment of power; they are no longer the 'man and woman of the house'.

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182 593 888 Where the transition is smooth, father and son continue to work together. One family in Luogh, for example, was regarded as a model of family harmony. It was made up of a young man and his wife and two children and the old couple. But the old man worked by his side, and the son deferred to his judgment. The greatest compliment the neighbours had for them was this: "Look at the Careys; old Johnny gives his boy a hand in everything. You wouldn't know which one has the land."

182 745 593 888 The introduction of the old-age pension has facilitated this transfer. Originally designed for the support of the aged in an industrial population in England, it has speedily woven itself into the fabric of Irish rural life. Nowadays, the farmer can turn over his land at the age of seventy. In doing so, he divests himself of his property which stands in the way of his receiving the pension. One countryman of my acquaintance sang the praises of the pension [434] in no uncertain terms. His words show clearly that, even with this new source of income at his disposal, the old, abdicating farm father still forms part of the family economic unit. "To have old people in the house", he said, "is a great blessing in these times, because if you have one it means ten bob a week and if you have two it means a pound a week coming into the house. You take a man like O'Donoghue (a neighbour) and every Friday he will go to Corofin to collect his ten bob. He may buy a couple of bottles of porter but he'll spend the

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rest on things for the household and then come home with a few shillings to go into the common fund."

For the old couple are still very important within the family. Their years of command do not disappear overnight. The change must be handled smoothly. The happiest compromise is that one farmer of Inagh described: "Every morning, even after I was married, I would go to the old man and ask him what I should do for the day, and the old man would say it is now time to do this or that, or the cows should have something done for them, or the garden be prepared. I would go then and spend twenty-thirty minutes doing what the old man said, and then I would go do my own business."

The solution rural Ireland suggests to this problem is deference and respect. There can be no equality between the generations. In the words of one local sage, who could discuss the matter with the experience of a Dorothy Dix: "When the new woman is brought into the house, she may have modern ideas and be hoity-toity about the way to do things. So the old woman and the new woman wouldn't get along. The old man wouldn't say anything but he would light his pipe and go out till the squabble is over. It might get so bad that the old woman would get up and leave, and go live with her daughter some place. She could do this if the daughter's husband's mother were dead, even though the father might still be living in the house.

"But these squabbles are bad things. If the new

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182 woman would ask the old person her opinion on
593 how to do this and that there never would be any
888 trouble and the new wife could go ahead and do just
578 as she pleased. Then the old woman would think she was doing it the way that she said. If the daughter-in-law did what she ought, she would do this and treat the old folks nice."

Deference and respect solve the problem, then, but if they do not, it is the older woman who must leave. That this should be the case reflects one great function of farm marriage. The son must cleave to his bride. If the worst comes to the worst, the new family may 'turn the old people out on the side of the road'. Terrible as such an ending would be, it is the necessary one. For the pattern of family and land must continue in the persons of the new man and woman and their children.

182 This desire is the binding force in the relations
593 of all the household. It is as strong in the old people
887 as in the new couple. The new balance of senti-
602 ments finds its expression in the inclusion of the children born to the young man and woman. Like so much of their behaviour, the country-people describe the new ties in terms of the 'help' they afford to the family corporation. And once again, naturally, an economic explanation is all too elliptical. A thoughtful farmer of Inagh generalized the matter in words which show the identity between help in farm work and social reciprocities: "When there are children in the house, the old

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finds its most compatible and its most enduring organization. No other social disposition sets a deeper stamp upon the countryman. No other is more immediate to the observer, tourist or anthropologist. No other, too, explains better why old custom lives today.

Ireland is in many ways an old person's country. Where emigration carries youth away, old age is disproportionately numerous. But that fact is not all the story, for the rural Irish are long-lived. The country districts set a norm for the Free State which shows itself statistically. Despite poverty, hardship, and the erroneously assumed 'decline of rural life', the countryman lives long and dies, often very old indeed. Many causes have been sought for this strange fact, but might it not be after all a simple matter? They live long because they have much to live for. In their own sphere of life, they are honoured; they have power.

We remember that the household and the family centres itself in them. Their room is semi-sacred in the fairy-lore; it is the best in the house. The chair by the fire, the seat of honour and most comfort, is theirs. Even with the transfer of command up on the farm, they are objects of marked deference.

But this is more than a family matter. The old people have privilege among and receive respect from others than their own relatives. The conduct which bestows both upon them is as much the folk

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custom of the community as it is the habit of family life. Where necessary, the community can enforce its maintenance. The community can, as it were, invade the family and regulate its members through gossip, verbal censure, and more rarely, direct intervention in the person of the priest.

The countryman's vocabulary is full of allusions to values upon age. A great deal of the judgments and the comments he makes upon his surroundings express them. Naturally, they do not discuss the organization of behaviour upon age in explicit terms; for such conducts are 'natural' and unchangeable in the minds of those who are shaped by them. But they are never silent upon the implications of such organization as it affects individual conduct in daily life. The upstart 'boy', the 'bold' child, the 'old man who ought to have shame for acting like that' are as constant objects of reproof and censure as the 'bad' father or son.

In general statements, one hears many expressions, day after day, which arise from the speaker's place within an age group. The broad opposition between 'old' and 'young' colours rural thinking powerfully. A great deal of the constant talk which flows back and forth among the 'friends' and neighbours who pass their lives within the rural community takes its form within this social context.

This is particularly true of discussion of the past. The past is a favourite topic; the 'old days' something of an obsession in the countryside. This

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521 is not only because one of the listeners was the
888 anthropologist 'looking for old custom'. For, where
561 descent is a critical nexus of habitual relationship and old age the most honoured state, the past cannot fail to be the focus of interest.

Thus the older men and women are very partial to the things of their own age. And the young people are, in part, swept along with them. The 'old times' are a very ready topic among the country-people. Many a time an old person will be got to tell of them; he or she takes little warming to the task. They were the hard times, even bad times, of famine and death but the speakers throw a glow of courage and glamour round them. There were few tools, no draft-animals, no shoes, none of the amenities of present existence. The listeners murmur phrases of commiseration and shake their heads in pity. "Weren't they the bad old times?" and "Wasn't it hard the work they had to do in the old days?" they ask one another. But there is a tinge of pride in their voices, in the manner of tellers and listeners alike.

For remembered necessities, in the eyes of the old people who tell the tale, are now feats of endurance to which the new generation could never aspire. That is the point for those who tell and those who listen. Where could you get a young
[481] man today to walk from Corofin to Ballinasloe, walk in his bare feet the forty miles and back over the stony roads? Where is the woman today who

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Where is the woman today who
could shoulder a creel of turf a hundred yards out through the bog mud to the famine road, before the Board put in the road to the bog above Dunnagore?

Often the expressions take a different turn. They become that universal complaint — the younger generation. "Young people aren't what they used to be," said one old farmer in the course of a general discussion of the golden age that was his youth. "They spend money for fags, they have to be gambling every night, or else to a dance, and if they happen to win a turkey they will nearly shake the house down [in their triumph]. There is no good in the country when things go on like this. In the old days a man used always be out repairing his stone walls, cleaning his land, or doing something. Now you can't get them to do anything unless you pay them."

Here he paused for an illustration, chose one from among his own cronies, and swept volubly on. "Wasn't old Keane out every night with his cattle, and he putting them in small fields and late in the night? Wasn't he up early in the morning and out working? They cleared a nice piece of land in the common. He kept at it till he had cattle all the way up by Ballyvaughan. You wouldn't get any of the young people to do that now. There's no controlling them."

Discussions of the present fall into the same vein. The past, for the older members of the community,

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reflects their glories and serves as a convenient vehicle for the expression of their superiority. In the same spirit, the present can be measured against the past, usually only to be found lacking.

But these statements express much more than a mere rivalry between old and young. They spring from a mutuality between them which transcends rivalry. The old days are better among other things, because the interdependence of young and old was greater. The present is less attractive because the old no longer control the young, and the young no longer aid the old, as they should. Both facts of this interrelation may be expressed, even though the speaker, if he be old, may cast them in terms of mistrust and dislike for the young. In fact, the whole of experience may be brought within this scheme of attitudes. To give an example, here is one old fellow's rationalization of his misgivings about the present Irish school system:

"I am patriotic and it may be a bad thing to say but I think the school system they have now is bad and the teaching of Irish is bad. In my day and before, a man might go to school when he could—maybe for only three months in the year. But he would know more than they get now when they go to school all the time. The old people learned more then. When a child finished school he would be expected to read a newspaper to the old people, and to write a letter for them, or to do sums. And he would do it well." His complaint is much longer

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but you have heard enough to see his mistrust of a system which to his mind makes no provision for the mutuality between young and old.

This mutuality was and is strongest in the realm of farm work. The farm family demands the co-operation of all its members. No less the community makes its valuation of young and old upon that co-operation. General discussions among the country-people bring out this fact again and again. To illustrate by quotation once more: two old fellows, adult farmers with families, could reach agreement upon a formula running somewhat as follows:

"The men were stronger in the past, they worked harder, while you try to get any young person to do as much work as the old men now and they would laugh at you. The young people today seem to see how little work they can do rather than how much. While the old men would strip down and compete with one another to see who can do the most work."

So they went on, but even in the midst of their theme they were forced to admit that there were compensations: "It is true for you that the people in the old times weren't as knacky as they are now. Wasn't it how they used to have the horse in a stall feeding, while they [themselves] would be out with a spade turning over the garden [and no plough]."

Most of these allusions are to the realm of farm

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work. Just as the rivalry between father and son is most intimate and most constant in the economy which they pursue together, so the expression of the conflict between the generations in the community takes the same form.

You will probably ask if there are not grains of truth in the older generation's statements. My answer is that I neither know nor care. And I feel the countryman is not much more concerned. For this is a very old rivalry and once its expression was even more formalized than it is today. We owe the first poem of the eighteenth-century poet O'Rahilly to the expression of this rivalry, in an older day when Gaelic poetry still survived. He was called in to defend the young unmarried men, the 'boys' of today, in a poetic contest over respective merits between them and the 'old men', that is, the married men of family and substance. And he played, too, in the hurley game which fought out the contest in another field. For we are dealing here not so much with truths or falsities as with group-attitudes reciprocally held. Pareto would call them derivations; he would find their residues in the sentiments of those grouped together about a common status in the community. Once these sentiments were expressed ceremonially as in O'Rahilly's day. Even now the men of Luogh point out a large stone. With that stone the 'men' and the 'boys' competed at tests of strength till just a few years ago.

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For the young people do not agree with their elders on the score of their own shortcomings. They do not express these attitudes. They have a good deal to say, on the other hand, among themselves from their own point of vantage. They express the reverse of the medal. The past is not so golden to them; and there are many among their elders whose idiosyncrasies can be swept aside with some such sweeping condemnation as 'old fool' and 'old blatherer'. Like the son I quoted in the last lecture, who listened patiently to his father, only to follow his own devices, they have their own valuations in which youth and strength outweigh age and ripe experience.

Yet within a system of values in which the old represent the nexus of kinship and bear honour within the community, the young people do not see the issue so clearly. There is as much respect as there is antagonism in their verbal assessment of the old people. In the non-verbal behaviour of daily conduct, deference is uppermost. This fact sobers their group's egocentricity. In their position there is a necessary balance between subordination and compensatory vauntings and distastes. If you remember Synge's *Playboy*, you remember how reality broke in upon the playboy when the community saw his father still very much alive.

So, within this framework the young men can recognize themselves as a distinct group—an age grade, to use technical language. They have their

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561 888 own interests and sentiments, opposed in the scheme of rural life to those of their elders. Various places, pursuits and forms of activity are their own preserve. They greet the suggestion that they should take their place in the gatherings of the old men with something of the derision they reserve for women. But the ambivalence of their attitudes makes general expression difficult. Their position imposes silence, except among themselves. Consequently, one finds their attitudes rather more frequently in particular annoyances, boredoms and chafings against restraint. Rural ceremony gives them few outlets today; the fine articulateness of O'Rahilly's day is either dammed or searches out more devious outlets.

The sentiments of both groups, then, are the products of a system of values about age status. The individual makes his statements and entertains his feelings by virtue of the place he occupies. These express not only a rough grouping of individuals of similar age and status but a rough interrelation between the groups so composed. They form a scaffolding of categorization in which each person takes his relative place.

551 888 One can trace this process in rural Ireland in the many names and epithets the local community bestows. Local titles are ephemeral; they have little currency outside the immediate circle of the townland and the village. At best they spread through a parish. They are nicknames, and express no more

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than the named-one's place in the hearts of his fellows. Yet many of them, too, are generic epithets and like 'old' and 'young' they may prefix a name and designate the bearer's social place. They thus come to express broad categories of a man's behaviour and describe not a biological or a physiognomic but a sociological individuality. All well-developed social systems show this power; rural Ireland makes much use of it.

Thus two common epithets in the brogue are of this latter kind. The countryman speaks often of a 'saint', in praise, and a *cailleach*, in condemnation. Both words refer only to the 'old'. In strict linguistics, both are metaphors, of course, for the brogue knows and makes use of the words in their proper meanings. *Cailleach*, the Gaelic word, is properly a 'hag' or 'witch'. A 'saint', of course, is canonized by the Church.

But the countryman who refers to this or that contemporary as a *cailleach* or a saint is not concerned with purity of diction. He is making a sociological categorization with an ethical bias. He is judging an old man or woman for his or her success in filling the role rural life assigns. His thinking is social, not reformist, as the term has come to be loosely used, but rather conditioned within the dispositions of a particular social pattern. Thus one man in Luogh, already referred to, who was a model of family harmony and 'had a kind word for everyone' in the local community, was a 'saint'.

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8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

551 888 Another old fellow, a leader in his village, could be described by a neighbour as follows:

"That old man is a typical Irishman. He is a saint and there isn't a thought against anyone in him. He is always in a good humour and if he went to town to take a drink he could stand in the one place till he dropped. He is as harmless as a child. He and his friend Roche are two level-headed farmers and they have met every sort of trouble. If you are in doubt about any advice in farming, you can go to them and they will give as good advice as you can get. It would pay a young man to listen to them."

191 551 888 I have quoted this rural eulogy for a reason. It shows much better than words of mine could how the speaker's mind could flow uninterruptedly, without any sense of transition, from ethical judgment to agricultural advice. For 'saintliness' of this kind is a matter of filling a social role. But it is one's role for the community that counts. That role runs all the way from peaceful and friendly demeanour to directing farm work. There is nothing individual in it; it is the behaviour the community patterns about the old man. It is his *noblesse oblige*. That the word 'saint' should be borrowed from religion should surprise no one. It is merely proof that one society survives in western civilization in which theology and the popular mind have not yet suffered a divorce. The early Puritan and the ancient Roman would have understood such a state of affairs.

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
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them to think I wasn't with them", he put it. No wonder, then, that the political allegiances of whole countrysides are constant factors in Irish politics.

The community reaches agreement upon its internal affairs, too, through the old men's discussions. It is in just this type of activity that one can at last put one's finger upon that nebulous force among men: public opinion. That force is not implemented; it is merely the power of gossip and censure; only in critical days, as in the time of land agitation, can it rise to action, as a last resort, and win itself an international name: the boycott. But it is none the less powerful.

But, in rural Ireland, the group through which this power flows serves another function which cannot be disassociated from its role as the seat of public opinion. The members of the old men's *cuaird* are the living repositories of tradition. In communities, such as Luogh, where the Irish language lingers on, many of them are *seanachaidhthe* or story-tellers. Among them the ancient repertories of legend, saga and folk-tale still find an audience. That the exponents of fairy-lore have always been, and are still, old men and old women, is no social accident. For the pattern of local life retains its continuity and preserves what it can of its conformity with the past through them.

But what of the young men, those who have not attained full status? They do not attend at the old men's house; they take no part in the deliberations

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

526 573 884 Athletic Association, the 'great hurler' may win his way to the admiration of all Ireland.

But at home, in the local community, the young 884 men remain what they are. Their distinction lifts 573 them not at all from their status. Their skills are nothing more than proficiencies. The pursuits of the subordinate generation are no more than 'good times' that 'pass the time'. For, through no plan or design, but merely through the force of the social organization of values and behaviours, the activities of the young men's cliques exert no larger role within the community.

For the young men's cliques do not primarily serve to knit the community as a whole the more firmly. The difference is structural. The activities of the young men unite them from farm to farm, from clique to clique, even from one community to the next. The integration of the young men is a looser and less inclusive integration than that the old men's clique performs, even though the numbers ephemerally joined in gamble, dance or hurley match are much greater.

● 888 573 For the old men's clique unites, in its controlling voice, both young and old. The old men's clique unites the old men in terms of their common individual positions as recipients of the respect of the community, and as heads, owners and commanders of their family corporations. It expresses for the community the same subordination of the young men that is their lot within their families.

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

people you pass in the town, how would you know what it is they are?"

Only the young men, like myself, would be frightened by this uncertainty in rural Ireland. For all but the old people, such mysteries are awesome and compelling. Once again, folk-belief fashions itself for a social end. In belief the believers unconsciously agree upon an emotional organization of human relations; folklore expresses once again the organization of the community upon age and upon the past. The old couple who move in among the fairy influences and the symbols of family tradition and sentiment in the west room, the old people in whom rural kinship is centred and through whom sentiment is directed to the mystic past of ancestral blood lineage, the old men and women round whose influence the local community patterns its local life, need not fear greatly the imagery that symbolizes the very place they occupy. Rather they can come to immerse themselves in it. They grow very learned in this lore. They are the ones who sometimes come to manipulate it. They are themselves, sometimes, half fairy. 'Wise men' and 'wise women' are always old. It is no accident that the commonest representation of the fairy power is an old man or woman. They are the initiates in the mysteries of the fairy faith.

In this fact one can see the final synthesis between social habit and belief. Rural kinship organizes men and women in a common orientation

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
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backward and upward toward the dead and the ancestral. The community bestows ever greater status and influence as one progresses further and further toward the age-grade of the old, in whom tradition and precedent are preserved and expressed. In the sphere of credence and emotion the fairy faith acts to the same end and is so designed. The design, in this instance as in all the others, is not conscious; no one has planned it. It is a design drawn from the social order and acting back upon it. Its imagery is traditional, but its efficacy is of the present. And for that reason it lives.

Thus, in the identification between the old, the dead and the influences which affect the goods, the conducts and the values of the countryman's life, the symbolic order is completed. Folk-belief, in the ancient fairy-cult, with its age-old imagery, makes a complete emotional synthesis, overlying and reacting back upon the sentiment and habit out of which it springs again and again with each generation that learns the old way of life. Consequently, each new generation works a change upon it; elements of the synthesis undergo constant re-embellishment and shift of emphasis. Both old and young are controlled by it, but each in a different way. Today the young are sceptical and a little rebellious; they repudiate much of the older imagery. All that the Church condemns in the 'pisherogues', they also condemn. Today folk-belief is undergoing marked change like all else in this world, like all else in Ireland.

14: Westropp B-4, 5 (no date)1910-12
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

XIV. *Calendar Customs.*

796 178 Most of these customs are so widely spread as to require only brief notice, and were noted, before 1816, by the Rev. James Grahame, the curate of Kilrush. They comprise the eating of pancakes on Shrove Tuesday and of eggs at Easter; playing tricks and "fooling" on April 1st; setting May bushes before houses on Old May Day; lighting bonfires on Midsummer Eve, dancing round them, and driving cattle through them; beginning hunting on Michaelmas Day; Hallowe'en practices on October 31st; midnight processions, with music, on certain nights in the week before Christmas, (which had just been discontinued in 1816); and mummers, wren boys, and bull-baiting on St. Stephen's Day.[1] The May bush died out, I believe, during the dark years of the Great Famine; I never heard of any limit, other than the clearance of the crops, for beginning hunting; but, except the bull-baiting and the waits, all the rest still exist.

[825] It is well to have to record the dying out of the custom of killing the wren on St. Stephen's Day, even if it springs from laziness rather than from humanity. "Who cares for the birds but God!" was once retorted when I "put in a word for" the wren. There is probably a very old prejudice against it, for the "droleen" stood confessed as a "little druid" among birds, and the "druid" of Irish tradition was not the majestic white-robed priest of the oak grove, but a sorcerer who injured meanly by spells, a foe of God and of His servants, but a contemptible and impotent one. This feeling was expressed in the contemptuous term *shandruee* ("old druid") for a worthless old man, in use in my boyhood. How far the wren rites have orthodox ritual or etiquette is doubtful. Formerly the youth of a whole district combined as wren boys, but now they go in bands of from two to six,[2] and the wren bush is often a mere branch with a few rags and no wren. A structure of evergreens, in general design like a *crux ansata*, covered with streamers and with the dead bird hung

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[1] Mason's *Parochial Survey* (1816), vol. ii.

[2] See Plate IX., from a photograph taken on December 26th, 1910, by Mrs. O'Callaghan Westropp of Coolreagh.

[P. 227]

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

unlicensed dogs, or when they discover a still on the mainland and arrest the "poor creatures" who were manufacturing "poteen" (illicit whiskey). They sometimes are called "peelers" in reference, a derogatory term assigned to their predecessors, the Royal Irish Constabulary, founded by Sir Robert Peel. (The Irish chose his surname to immortalize and the English his Christian name—"bobbie.") Seven verses of my ballad satirize the much resented role of the police during the aftermath of the shipwreck. The absence of guards in Inis Beag means that the pubs can stay open after legal hours, sometimes until two or three o'clock in the morning; and in the island where the police are stationed, one must enter the pubs after hours, if permitted, by the back door and drink sitting on the floor.

The *Guide to the Social Services*, published by the Dublin Stationary Office in 1959, lists under 76 headings the multitudinous services and subsidies provided the Irish people by local and central governments. Among the most important to Inis Beag folk are: Widow's Pension, Old Age Pension (called "the old age"), Unemployment Assistance (know as "the dole"), Children's Allowances, General Medical Services, General Institutional and Specialist Services, Mental Treatment, Disabled Persons Maintenance Allowances, Maternity and Infant Services, Free School Books in National Schools, Employment and Special Emergency Schemes (which include road improvement), Agricultural Education, Schemes of Agricultural Development, Gaeltacht Eireann Schemes (which include housing and language subsidies), Private Housing Grants and Loans, Local Authority Housing, and Land Commission Housing. Most of these programs are handled by civil servants who visit Inis Beag from a nearby island or the mainland, and at any time during the year there is usually at least one government agent conducting his business in the island. The services and subsidies are welcomed by the folk even though seldom considered adequate, and only one arouses bitter antagonism: elders dislike the law which requires them to will their land at age 70 before they can go on the old age, as well as the probing of functionaries who request personal information of potential old age pensioners, especially information about remittance monies which might disqualify the applicants. Almost all of the islanders are on the dole, and few express outwardly embarrassment or shame as regards the fact —"The government has a right to give us the dole."

Informal Social Control

The informal social control system of Inis Beag comprises the parish priest and curate, the headmaster of the school—chosen and strictly regulated by the parish priest, and a "king." The position of king is not hereditary and not supported by a majority of the population as in some other Irish islands, but is self-assumed and based on a number of factors to be considered shortly. Not only is king strictly a term of reference, but it is employed by the folk only when they are most critical of his actions; it also is used by certain outsiders who are frequent visitors to Inis Beag and are aware of the power structure there, but always out of earshot of the islanders.

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
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declining steadily, and between 1951 and 1960 there were only nine marriages between folk who remained in the island—and since then but five.

The prevalence of celibacy and late marriage is a matter of grave concern to the people. My analysis of these phenomena reveals over 20 contributing factors, of which I will consider only the most important—and these briefly, since most of them will be addressed further within the contexts of the family, personality, and emigration. The one most often voiced by the islanders is the emigration of girls in increasing numbers at younger ages; of the nine girls eligible for marriage, only one is older than 25 years, and several are contemplating emigration. The folk are much less prone to talk of the single estate and late marriage than they are of emigration, which share many of the same causes, and they appear to know fewer of the causes of the former and are less willing to assign relative weights when assessing them. The cause of all three conditions most often cited by both writers and social scientists is the system of inheritance, whereby land cannot be subdivided but is passed on to one son who must wait to marry until his father dies or is willing (or forced) to pass on the land, and his siblings have married or emigrated. By this time, the son is usually middle-aged and cautious in making his choice of a spouse. Most fathers in Inis Beag are loath to surrender their property, and with it control of the family, to sons wishing to marry, and some even will postpone receiving the old age in order to maintain their status position past the age of 70 years. A father who does not choose a successor among several sons until late in his life—which is a common occurrence—can retard their marriages if they choose to "wait it out." Equally loath to disturb the family *status quo* is the mother, who fears not only the loss of her commanding position in the household, but the loss of her son's affection to an incoming daughter-in-law. The man who wishes to marry and is prevented from doing so by domineering and jealous parents is the subject of gossip, and his plight is regarded as a "shame."

Since late marriage has been a persistent phenomenon in Ireland since the great famine, it has become institutionalized and serves as an expectation for young people. That the folk are aware of this cause is attested by their frequent advice to offspring that they postpone marriage to conform to island tradition. This advice invariably is buttressed by a rationale of males not having enough "sense" to marry until they approach the age of 40 years. Reflected in the rationale is the system of male age grading conceptualized in Inis Beag: a man is a "boy" or "lad" until 40 years of age, an adult until 60 years, middle-aged until 80, and old-aged after that (exhilarating to the American anthropologist who comes from a society obsessed with the "cult of youth"). Another rationale for late marriage often heard in Inis Beag is the impossibility of divorce in Catholic Ireland, which demands that the choice of a spouse be well considered. It appears that this argument is usually used to explain late marriage when other factors are in fact responsible—certainly when "considering" covers two or more decades.

Two closely linked causes of celibacy and late marriage seldom broached in Inis Beag are male solidarity and the unwillingness of many men to accept the responsibilities of marriage, particularly its sexual responsibilities. Marriage is looked on with trepidation, or at least as something less than desirable. The marriageable man in his late twenties and thirties is usually sexually repressed to an unbelieve-

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
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Implicit in these statistics are such Irish phenomena as monogamy, the predominance of the nuclear family (Only 10.3 percent are extended in Inis Beag.), family exogamy, patrilocal residence, and a high incidence of celibacy. The last listed bachelor who lives with his widowed sister-in-law, and frequently is visited by a brother's adolescent grandson from the mainland, is regarded by many bachelors as fortunate—"He has a woman and a boy to work and no 'responsibilities.'"

Inheritance in the island is patrilineal, and before a man can marry, his father or widowed mother must "pass on" the property to him. To encourage aged men to surrender ownership of their land, a statute forbids their receiving the old age at 70 years until they have so acted. But despite this law, six Inis Beag elders aged 70 to 79 years—with a total of seven bachelor sons ranging in age from 32 to 47 years (not counting eight others who have emigrated but are eligible to inherit)—still maintain ownership themselves. When a man is without sons, he most commonly wills the land to a brother's son or arranges to have a man wed his daughter and "marry in" to the household. An in-marrying son-in-law, it is interesting to note, may pay a bride wealth, which usually is much larger than the dowry of the girl, for he has no land of his own. Among contemporary landholders, five have obtained property from uncles, six from widowed mothers, and two by marrying in. Other land in Inis Beag has been procured through purchase, exchange, gift-giving, and land dispute verdicts.

A major cause of celibacy, late marriage, disputes, and emigration related to the system of inheritance, seldom mentioned either in writings about Inis Beag or by the islanders, is the common practice of a father playing off his sons against one another for the patrimony in order to achieve favored treatment for his wife and himself in their waning years. Elders are well treated, in part as a result of the above and in part out of the fear that after death their ghosts will punish those who have maltreated them. Often the playing off of sons for the patrimony leads to factionalism within the family and may provoke a secretly favored son to emigrate or, more seriously, all sons acting in concert to depart in anger and disgust. Today, a total of 22 married men, widowers, and widows whose average age is 65.7, hold land that is inheritable by a total of 56 sons whose average age is 30.1 years. (The 16 elders who have a total of 20 sons in the island average 66.7 years of age and their offspring 33.6.) The uncertainty about which sibling will inherit is reflected in these figures: of the 59 present landholders, 47 percent are first born, 42 percent second, 8 percent third, and 3 percent fourth and beyond.

Although the Inis Beag family is totally exogamous, the village is only 78.3 percent exogamous (The range for the four villages is from 75 to 83 percent.). Since 1911, six women have married men, mostly farmers, living in communities along the neighboring coast and only one an Inis Thiar islander, while four mainland and five Inis Thiar women have wed men from Inis Beag. During this same 50 year period, six local men have married into contiguous mainland settlements and one into Inis Thiar, but no men from the outside have married into the island. As we noted already, immigrants for two or three generations are regarded as strangers by the folk, and the same is true of in-marrying wives; these women are treated aloofly and are the victims of much spiteful gossip. Many female siblings marry locally rather than emigrate—one case of four sisters, five of

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belief that the "good" women does not enjoy sex and, conversely, that the sexually responsive woman is by virtue of the fact "evil."[9]

As might be expected, there is much sibling rivalry in the island. Between brothers, the major factors responsible are competition for the affection of the mother and for the patrimony; the latter condition adds fuel to the fire of disputes between many sons and their fathers. Competition for the mother's affection is also an important cause of rivalry between brothers and sisters, particularly when the love of the mother for her sons leads her "to slave" for them and "to demand that her daughters do likewise." But the early separation of the sexes and inculcation of male solidarity contribute as well to this antagonism. In some families, affectional ties between children and their grandparents—both agnatic and uterine—are closer than other kinship bonds, with the exception of that between mothers and sons. The grandmother in the extended family plays a considerable role in childrearing, even when the relationship between herself and her daughter-in-law is strained, which is usual; and children often visit the home of their mother's parents, where they are treated indulgently.

The displaced parents in the joint family draw into the background reluctantly and with considerable difficulty. Writing of the folk of Co. Clare, Arensberg and Kimball say:

> Where the transition goes smoothly, father and son continue to work the farm together, but more often as the father grows older he retires to his seat by the hearth. . . . The coming-in of the daughter-in-law is sometimes not so harmonious. Disputes arise. . . In such cases, the mediations of the parish priest and public opinion generally patch up a compromise, but, as far as the authors have observed, the transition is a gradual and successful one. The young woman usually serves a sort of apprenticeship at the hands of the mother-in-law . . . and at least during the young woman's childbearing years the older one maintains her control (Arensberg and Kimball 1940:123–124).

The transition is far less smooth in the island; fathers work less with their sons and retire sooner to the hearth (and the bed); and the apprenticeship of the in-marrying woman seldom extends beyond the birth of her first child. Disputes between grandparents and parents in the extended family of Inis Beag appear to be more numerous than in Co. Clare.

Disputes

Disputes between kin and non-kin in Irish communities have been studied seldom until very recently. In reading what writers and social scientists have written about peasant Ireland in general, and Inis Beag in particular, one often is led to the conclusion that disputes are are or altogether lacking. Nativism and primitivism have caused many observers to present this distorted picture of social

[9] I must stress the provisional nature of these data on sex, and those to follow on p. 110, for they are based on a limited sample of men and women respondents and relate to the cultural area of most circumspection.

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
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rejuvenate the moribund tradition. However, several men past the age of 40 years still are able to perform jigs, reels, hornpipes, and hop-jigs with dexterity, "when the humor is on them," and are called out at parties and in the pubs; a few women will step dance in their homes or at small social gatherings.

There is considerable evidence to suggest that the rigid body and arms of the step dancer are an early nineteenth century product of Jansenist doctrine in the church, which attempted to desexualize dancing. Most of the movement is below the hips of the dancer, and it is the feet of the performer which are watched intently by the audience, at least openly. Inis Beag men move their upper bodies and arms more than is customary on the mainland, and they are not as graceful as other Irish dancers.

Figure dancing is called "set" dancing in Ireland, and there are many such dances, each of which combines a number of simple and complex figures performed by the couples. There is only one set in Inis Beag; it bears no name and is danced by one or more groups of four couples each. The many figures of the dance are simple, and it takes about 20 minutes to complete. I have heard young dancers complain at the end of a night of the tediousness of the single set, and some of them are learning other Irish figures at language school dances—"The Walls of Limerick" and "The Bridge of Athlone," among others. The most enjoyed movement of the local set is the one at the end in which the man holds his partner closely and twirls her almost violently, sometimes for longer than is prescribed so that the musician must pause or alter his rhythm. With bodily contact between partners otherwise so limited, perhaps this figure allows the expression of repressed sexuality.

Parties

It is appropriate to describe the Inis Beag party and a festive night at the pub in this chapter, because they are esthetic as well as social events, in which are combined storytelling, music, song, and dance. Parties are very much the same, whether held in the winter or the summer or to welcome home a long departed emigrant or to "drag home" a new bride. Only two rooms of the house are utilized —the kitchen and "the room" adjoining it—and benches are placed along the walls to supplement the chairs and bed on which guests will sit. The barrel or two of stout to be served is placed in the back hall off the kitchen, if there is such a hall, or in a back corner of the kitchen, and one man is assigned the task of dispensing the drink and remaining at his post throughout the night. Another man acts as "pourer" and fills a bucket from which he pours the stout into several mugs and glasses which are circulated from man to man. A bottle of whiskey is opened and proffered only to the old men, who often sit in a group beside the fireplace and exchange anecdotes and tales. On a table in "the room" are placed bottles of wine and soft drinks to accommodate the women and non-drinkers among the men before and after refreshments are served. Sometimes an elderly woman will drink surreptitiously of the whiskey or stout, and it is customary for the musicians and those who sing and step dance the most to be awarded extra amounts of stout. Women